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***From the Office of the Director of Health***

### **New Equipment Improves Air Quality Monitoring**

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department adds a new continuous air quality monitor to measure hourly levels of particle pollution less than 2.5 microns (PM2.5) in size.

“PM2.5 is called fine particulate matter,” explains Doug Neidigh, Coordinator of the Air Quality Control Division. “In fact, these particles are approximately one twentieth the width of a human hair.”

Particulate matter in the air can be a mixture of solids and liquid droplets. Some particles are emitted directly, while others are formed in the atmosphere when other pollutants react. Sources of PM2.5 can include vehicles, power plants, agricultural burning, wood burning and some industrial processes.

The new monitor continuously collects air samples and sends the data to an EPA Web site ([www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov)) where it is used to calculate the current Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI is an index that indicates how clean or dirty the air is, and recommends precautions individuals can take to protect their health. The index lists the air quality in one of six categories ranging from good to hazardous. If the PM2.5 count causes air quality to fall into the “Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups” (Orange) category, the health department will issue a warning through local media.

To date, the Springfield area has remained in compliance with the PM2.5 air quality standard. Nevertheless, residents are encouraged to access the Springfield page of the [airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) Web site at <http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=airnow.showlocal&CityID=433> to monitor air quality levels as they plan outdoor activities. This is especially important for individuals who are more sensitive to fine particulate pollution. People most at risk for health complications due to high levels of fine particulate matter in the air include senior adults, children, people with asthma and individuals with heart or lung disease.

For more information, visit [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) or call the Air Quality Control Division at (417) 864-1086.

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